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TAGS: [KDEM](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: RAMADI: SIGNS OF PROGRESS ON THE SECURITY FRONT
MAY PAVE WAY FOR LOCAL ELECTIONS

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[C](#). BAGHDAD 839

Classified By: PRT LEADER Jim Soriano, for reasons 1.4 b and d.

[1](#)1. (U) This is a PRT Anbar cable.

[1](#)2. (C/REL MCFI) SUMMARY. The city of Ramadi has made significant progress on security, economic recovery, and governance since last summer. Attacks are down, ISF recruits are up, and there is a nascent city government. Anbaris themselves are turning increasingly against terrorist elements. The Anbar Provincial Council, after an absence of 11 months due to terrorist threats, held its first meeting in Anbar on Mar 13. Key to this progress has been the tribal cooperation led by Sheikh Sattar Abu Risha. To further maximize this progress and to minimize political discord, the conduct of provincial elections - a consistent demand of PRT contacts - is the necessary next step. END SUMMARY.

Positive Trends

[1](#)3. (C/REL MCFI) Ramadi, the provincial capital of Al-Anbar province, long known as the center of Al-Qaeda in Iraq, (AQI) strength, is turning around. In the past seven months, AQI's influence and freedom of movement in the Ramadi area have been greatly reduced. Combined operations by Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and Coalition Forces (CF) are squeezing the remaining pockets of insurgent activity from the city. Although Ramadi is far from stable, positive trends are evident that were not on the scene last summer.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Public opinion has turned against the insurgents, and many citizens, especially the tribal sheiks, are increasingly supportive of Coalition Force (CF) efforts. In mid-2006, Ramadi streets typically appeared deserted. Today many neighborhoods have open markets, and pedestrians are seen along the roads. Cleaning crews, a new development, are typically seen on the streets daily. One telling example of the return to normalcy is a local adult literacy program which opened on Jan. 20 with 50 students. By Feb. 4, some 800 adults were enrolled, more than half of whom are women. Students tell us that their prime motivation for learning to read is to become more employable.

Security Increasing

[1](#)5. (C/REL MCFI) Attacks (roadside IEDS, VBIEDS, suicide attacks, rocket/mortar shelling and small arms attacks) have decreased by 40 per cent since November. Once averaging 20 such attacks a day, they now average 12 a day. IEDs are still the most effective insurgent weapon against us. Of note though, 90 plus per cent of roadside IEDS are now surface-laid instead of sub-surface. Only a few months ago, most roadside IEDs were subsurface, indicating that the

insurgents had greater freedom of movement to emplace them. That they are now hastily-placed on the road surface suggests that the insurgents have less local support in order to operate in the open. The result is IEDs are less effective.

Tribes Working With The U.S.

¶16. (C/REL MCFI) Last summer most of Ramadi's tribes were opposed to the Coalition or were neutral. Today many of them have come off the fence and have aligned themselves with the U.S. (Ref A). Only a few local tribes remain hostile. Last September, a coalition of local tribes, led by Sheikh Sattar Abu Risha, formed an anti-AQI front called the Al-Anbar Awakening Council (SAA). Sattar and the other SAA sheikhs have adopted a platform that calls for AQI's defeat and declares the CF as a friendly force. Although the SAA is a localized phenomenon) it draws its support chiefly in the Ramadi area) its success in countering AQI influence is being imitated by tribes in other parts of the province. Some sheikhs in Fallujah, and even in the central Euphrates town of Hit, have expressed their desire to work with the Coalition and to urge tribal youths in their locales to join the Iraq's army and police forces. That said, some of the more prominent Sheikhs of the province are cautious of Sattar and are suspicious of his long term intentions.

¶17. (SBU) A strong working relationship has developed between MNF-West that is responsible for all of Anbar, the First Brigade of the 3d Infantry Division (the unit responsible for Ramadi), and the SAA. This cooperative partnership has expanded, allowing both MNF-W and Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) Anbar to deepen our engagement with the city. In every major meeting we have with Sattar, he ensures dozens,

BAGHDAD 00001036 002 OF 002

to up over 100 sheikhs, imams and other notables attend. On Mar 7, Sattar hosted the second Ramadi reconstruction conference at his compound near the city (Ref B). The event drew some 100 Anbari notables and businessmen interested. More importantly, groundwork was laid for further reconstruction and economic projects.

The Tribes and Security

¶18. (SBU) The PRT and MNF-W officials have asked Ramadi tribes to assist in providing recruits to the local Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). They have done so to great results. The city's once non-existent IP force has swelled to over 3000 members. The IP's performance continues to improve daily and is showing itself to be a courageous and dedicated force.

In the past, Anbari males have shunned enlisting because of the widespread view that the IA is a Shia institution. However, chiefly through Sattar's initiative, over 400 prospective recruits have stepped forward to join the army.

Progress on Municipal Government

¶19. (SBU) Where Ramadi once had no city government, a new mayor, Latif Obeid Ayadih, was appointed by the governor in January. Latif is closely associated with the Sattar faction. Nonetheless, Anbar's capital city still does not have a municipal council. Such a body is necessary for moving forward on economic reconstruction projects. The top priority of the upcoming brigade-level embedded PRT in Ramadi will be the development of the city government.

Provincial Capital, But No Provincial Government

¶10. (SBU) (U) The Provincial Council fled Ramadi for the relative safety of Baghdad in April 2006 amid insurgent threats and a significant complex attack on a meeting of the

Provincial Reconstruction Development Committee (PRDC) at the Government Center. On March 13, 2007 it held its first meeting in the province in 11 months in connection with a visit to Ramadi of Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki. Apart from that event, the Council is effectively in exile in Baghdad, meeting there and adopting resolutions. Its normal office space in Ramadi, which physically is in good shape, has long gone unused. The Council,s absence on the local scene hinders its ability to govern and erodes its credibility. Sattar,s SAA has long complained of the Council,s absence and purported ineffectiveness.

¶11. (SBU) By contrast, Gov. Ma,amoun Al-Alwani is the sole provincial official who keeps regular office hours at the Government Center in Ramadi. By some accounts, Ma,amoun has been the target of numerous (over 20) failed assassination attempts. The Government Center, a complex of several buildings, has been a magnet for insurgent sniper and mortar attacks. While such attacks have decreased notably lately, the facility is a forbidding bunker guarded by U.S. Marines.

¶12. (SBU) But even under these circumstances, some positive trends can be seen. The provincial council is renting a villa in a safe part of Ramadi city which it plans to use for the return of some governmental functions to the capital. Moreover, plans are well underway to create a security zone around the Government Center. In short, talk about the normal functioning of the provincial government in Anbar, regarded as unrealistic several months ago, is today a topic for serious discussion and planning.

Need for Elections

¶13. (C/REL MCFI) Although the Battle for Anbar is not yet won, the trends in Ramadi point in the right direction. Security in the city is much better than it was several months ago, which has led to the early signs of a return to normal life. Key to further progress lies with local elections. The call for provincial and city elections comes up in almost all of the PRT's meetings with Ramadi citizens and notables. If the city,s security continues to progress at this rate in the next six months, Anbaris will be ready to vote by year,s end.
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